

Adam Calvert Bentley and Ardgowan Antiques

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**Louis XV Chinoiserie Lacquered Bronze and Ormolu
Paperweight attributed to the Frères Martin**

£5,850

A rare Louis XV bronze sculpture showing two robed figures, one kneeling, on a base cast with stylised rock-work and foliage

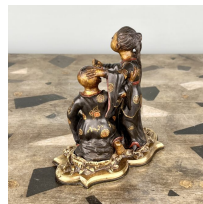
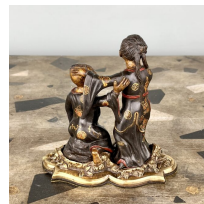
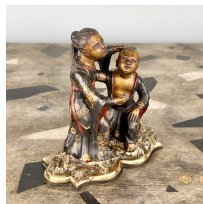
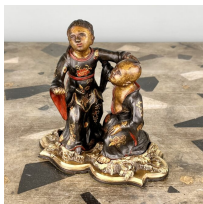
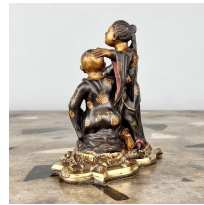
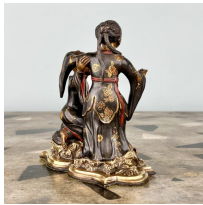
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Depth: 8 cm (3 inches)

Height: 15 cm (6 inches)

Width: 15 cm (6 inches)

Year: French. mid 18th century



An identical bronze group, one of a pair, appears in the illustrated pair of Louis XV candelabra, probably supplied by one of the leading Marchands Merciers of the day, such as Lazare DuVaux, who used the Martin Brothers and there technique of japanning copiously

Literature:

Catalogue, Partridge, London, 1999, no. 34. (illustrated) shows the pair to the offered example

A. Forray-Carlier and M. Kopplin, *Les secrets de la laque française, le vernis*

Martin, Paris, 2014, pp. 100-103.

Bronze lacquered in Chinese taste was a creation widely commercialised by Parisian marchands-merciers in the 1740s, a subject explored in depth by the 2014 exhibition at the musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris (Forray-Carlier and Kopplin, op. cit., pp. 100-103).

Judging from contemporary sale catalogues, numerous in the 18th century, collections included these lacquered bronze figures commonly known as magots. While no specific evidence can be found in the surviving bills of sale of the Martin Frères, dealers and marchand-merciers make frequent reference to their name when mentioning these chinoiserie objects indicating that they were likely responsible for much of the production.

For example, using the term pagode interchangeably with magot, the compiler of the 1767 auction catalogue of the collection of Jean de Julienne describes an object very similar to this one: « une pagode de goût Chinois, en vernis de Martin fond noir et or de relief, garnie de terrasse en bronze, jormant presse a papiers » [a figure group in the Chinese taste, japanned in vernis Martin in black and gold relief, furnished with a bronze base, in the form of a paperweight].

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The inventory taken in 1753 on the death of the Duchesse du Maine, a member of the high aristocracy married to Louis XIV's grandson, reveals just how fashionable these objects had become: she cleverly displayed them alongside of her collection of old Asian lacquerware within interiors in the latest taste.

Diderot and d'Alembert's Encyclopédie amusingly takes a less enthusiastic view, defining the term magot as follows:

"Short and fat bizarre imitations of Chinese or Indian figures in clay, plaster, bronze or porcelain which decorate rooms.

These are the sort of precious baubles which the country is obsessed with and which stubbornly continue to appeal. They have driven ornaments of much better taste from our apartments. These days, Magots reign supreme."

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